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BOOK REVIEWS

THE RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF NEW ENGLAND. King's Chapel Lectures.
The Harvard University Press. 1917. Pp. vi, 356.

This volume consists of fourteen lectures delivered on the Lowell Institute foundation in the winters of 1914-16. Four of the lectures, by Prof. John W. Platner of Andover Theological Seminary, are on the Congregationalists. The Unitarians and the Revolt against the Standing Order are described by Prof. W. W. Fenn, Dean of the Harvard Divinity School. The lecture on the Baptists is written by Dr. George E. Horr, President of the Newton Theological Institute. Prof. Rufus M. Jones of Haverford College speaks for the Quakers. Prof. George Hodges, Dean of the Episcopal Theological School, Cambridge, has two lectures on the Episcopalians, and Dr. William E. Huntington, formerly President of Boston University, two on the Methodists. The Universalists are represented by Dr. John C. Adams, pastor of the Universalist Church in Hartford, Conn., and the Swedenborgians by Prof. William L. Worcester, President of the New-Church Theological School, Cambridge. An important omission is explained in the Preface: "One deficiency the Committee sincerely regret. It appeared impossible to secure either for the lectures or for the book an historical narrative from a member of the Roman Catholic communion. The Committee feel that the book ought not to be issued without at least some word recognizing the contribution which that Church has made to the Religious History of New England." An omission, real though of less weight, is that of the picturesque if strenuous story of the Shakers.

The ecclesiastical history of New England is concerned with two groups of forces: the one, centripetal, that of Congregationalism or the Standing Order, as it was called; the other, centrifugal, the various revolts against it. Each of these latter had, as it believed, a distinctive gospel of its own, the preaching of which brought it into opposition to the established order, and in most cases to the other dissenters also. Even if a group of men, enthusiastic for a new variety of gospel, desired merely to utter themselves undisturbed, as Dr. Adams says was the case with the Universalists (p. 317),

they were unable to do so, because divergence from the established belief was accounted heresy; and though the attempt to improve heretics by burning had been given up, the endeavor to show them their wickedness by excommunication, social ostracism, and occasionally whipping, was still active. This put a premium on partisan loyalty, and gave every man an attitude as of going armed. For a couple of centuries whatever other aspect of Christianity the religion of New England lacked, it preëminently embodied the Church Militant. Rev. John Wilson, pastor of the First Church of Boston, who died in 1667, was especially commended by the author of certain Memorial Verses for his sturdy hatreds:

“Firm stood he ’gainst the Familist,
 And Antinomian spirit strong;
 He never loved the Sep’ratist,
 Nor yet the Anabaptists’ throng.
 Neither the Tolerator’s strain,
 Nor Quakers’ spirit could he brook,
 Nor bowed to the Morellian train,
 Nor children’s right did overlook.
 Nor did he slight our liberties
 In civil and in church concerns,
 But precious were they in his eyes
 Who stood among their fixed friends.”

It was characteristic, however, of New England Puritanism that under its hard shell it had a sweet kernel. The Memorialist continues:

“Gaius, our host, ah, now is gone!
 Can we e’er look for such another?
 But yet there is a mansion
 Where we may all turn in together.
 No moving inn but resting place,
 Where his blest soul is gathered;
 Where good men going are apace
 Into the bosom of their head.
 Ay, thither let us haste away.
 Sure heaven all the sweeter be
 (If there we ever come to stay)
 For him, and other such as he.”¹

The Standing Order had in fact the firmly established position suggested by its name. Church and State were not only joined; for a time they were one. By a law in 1631 none but Church-

¹ New England’s Memorial. Nathaniel Morton. Plymouth, 1826. Pp. 191, 192.

members were entitled to the civil franchise, though all the inhabitants of a town were liable for the support of its minister. The principle of general taxation for the support of the ministry, though not always enforced, was not finally abandoned until 1833. This inequality bore especially hard upon two classes: those who were Congregationalists but not Church-members, and those who regarded the established ministry as no genuine ministry; because—in the opinion of the Quaker—its ministers were “hirelings,” or—of the Baptist—because they baptized children, or—of the Episcopalian—because they had never been properly ordained. From within and from without, the Standing Order met opposition.

An even stronger opposition was aroused, however, by its doctrinal system, which was Calvinism. The absence in the colonial period of newspapers, magazines, works of fiction and art, the fewness of books of poetry, general literature, and science, the tremendous importance attached to the human soul and the narrow definition given to the soul, all combined to centre an absorbing interest in theology. Edwards, Hopkins, Emmons, of the earlier day, and Bushnell, Beecher, Brooks, of the later, showed that this system produced profound thinkers and inspiring preachers; while, at the other end of the intellectual scale, the doctrines of foreordination and the Divine decrees were discussed at the village store and with himself by the farmer jogging to mill.

The rigidity and severity of the Calvinism of the day are indicated by the revolts against it. These fall loosely into two groups: those of the seventeenth century, consisting chiefly of Quakers, Baptists, and Episcopalians, whose attacks centred on the polity of Congregationalism; and those of the half-century between 1770 and 1820, when opposition was primarily doctrinal. By this latter period the punishments for theological dissent had become social rather than material, and men who were brave enough to say aloud, “It isn’t so,” now found themselves not alone. Protests therefore became frequent: from the Free Will Baptists (1770), the Methodists (1772–90), the Universalists (1774), the “Christians” (1801), the Unitarians (1800–20), the Swedenborgians (1818).¹ By the time these had made their attacks on New England Calvinism, so little of it was left that Calvin would not have recognized it. The spirit rent it sore, and came out of it, and it was as one dead, inasmuch that many said, “It is dead.”

There is always a tendency to measure the universe by the denominational foot-rule. This often accounts for the unfavorable

¹ These dates are not exact but only approximate.

opinions we are apt to have of our opponents. The Bay Colony had an unquestionable ground of complaint against Thomas Morton of Merrymount for giving his friends, the Indians, rum and muskets; but the fact that he observed Christmas and May Day and used the Book of Common Prayer seems hardly sufficient ground for charging him with setting up "a schoole of athism"; and there seems little other ground for the charge (p. 208). Wilbur Fiske was greatly exercised in mind because when he entered the ministry in 1818 "there was not a single literary institution of any note under Methodist patronage. He felt deeply the necessity of such means of training, both for the ministry and the laity, and gave himself to the cause of Christian education with great devotion and zeal" (p. 265). When one considers that at that time Harvard, Yale, Dartmouth, Brown, and Bowdoin Colleges were in existence, each having been founded for the training of young men in religion, it may be questioned whether the first adjective in the last clause should not rather be "Methodist."

The theological climate of the present day is widely different from that of a century and a half ago, and there is the temptation for each denomination which has fought its fight, and which finds its distinctive gospel now largely adopted by the thought of the time, to claim that it has been the agent to which the modifying change is due. While this claim is not directly made by any of the authors of this volume, several imply that they would be justified in making it. Their manner of refraining suggests Casca's description of Cæsar's behavior when Antony offered him a crown: "As I told you, he put it by once; but, for all that, to my thinking, he would fain have had it. Then he offered it to him again; then he put it by again; but, to my thinking, he was very loth to lay his fingers off it." This tendency is deprecatingly referred to in describing the influence of the New Church:

"The opinions quoted above from James Freeman Clarke and Edward Everett Hale, that Swedenborg's thought has been spiritualizing both philosophy and religion; that Swedenborgianism has done the liberating work of the last century, and that the statements of Swedenborg's religious works have revolutionized theology, if they refer to effects consciously derived from Swedenborg, are doubtless exaggerations. If they include the unconscious influence of his writings, they are probably understatements of the truth" (p. 346).

Undoubtedly, the propagation by each denomination of its distinctive principles has tended to modify current thought; but to ascribe

the profound difference between us and our forefathers to any one of them is to mistake our surf-splashing for the rise of the tide. The change is owing rather to a myriad of agencies, most of them invisible, which go to make up what we call the spirit of the age. The *Zeitgeist* picks a thread from here and another from there, but both origins and effects are rarely traceable.

“So schaff’ ich am sausenden Webstuhl der Zeit,
Und wirke der Gottheit lebendiges Kleid.”

There is, however, in these lectures very little blowing of the denominational trumpet. Its note may perhaps be heard in the glowing account of the accomplishment of the Baptists and of the Universalists. In case of the latter there is, moreover, a tone which suggests children with a grievance against others who refuse to play with them (pp. 303, 318); for the difficulty between the Universalists and Unitarians is, as Dr. Adams says, “more social than anything else” (p. 319).

With limited time, extended treatment of any subordinate point is of course impossible. Yet, in the interest of proportion, one may wish that a fuller consideration than the very brief mention of them had been given to the cases of Anne Hutchinson and Roger Williams and to the witchcraft episode. Again, both Professor Platner and Dean Hodges mention the remarkable words of Francis Higginson on leaving England in 1629:

“We will not say, as the Separatists were wont to say at their leaving of England, ‘Farewell, Babylon! farewell, Rome!’ but we will say, Farewell, dear England! farewell, the Church of God in England, and all the Christian friends there! We do not go to New England as Separatists from the Church of England, though we cannot but separate from the corruptions of it; but we go to practise the positive part of church reformation, and propagate the gospel in America” (pp. 11, 212).

Neither of the lecturers, however, explains why, after these ardent professions of loyalty to the Church of England, such a change took place that soon after the travelers landed at Salem they were so thoroughly Separatist that they could not tolerate Conant, Lyford, Oldham, and the brothers Brown, but joined with Endicott in informing these men that there was no convenient place in Salem or New England for the use of the Prayer Book, and that it and they must leave the country.

It is lacking in completeness, to say the least, to speak of the Quaker “martyrs,” and to declare that it was to guard against “a

religious peril" that the officials of the Massachusetts Bay Colony adopted "stringent methods of dealing with them"—to make this statement (p. 180) and to say nothing of the extraordinary conduct which gave rise to the stringent methods. The behavior of the Quakers was not only subversive of the principle of the Puritan State but was too often against common modesty, and was such as would not be tolerated in any city for a moment today. The long-suffering of the magistrates with these conscientious offenders against law and public decency should not be overlooked in drawing an indictment against Puritan harshness.

It is interesting to note the similarity of religious character and thought which widely different types of training have produced in the authors of this significant book. The distinctive message of each denomination has been filtering into the thought of the others, so that it is no longer to the Universalists that one must look for the news of a Divine love unsatisfied so long as a single soul is left unsaved; nor to the Baptist for the assertion of the preëminent importance in the service of God of conscious responsibility and mature choice; nor to the Episcopalian for an exhibition in appealing ritual of the corporate nature of religion. Each has now the flowers of which the others have sowed the seed, and each, not grudgingly but gladly, may say, with Samson, "If ye had not plowed with my heifer, ye had not found out my riddle." As the patent of each on its special property has expired, denominational aggressiveness has been less called for, and greater opportunity has been given for a common type of Christian character. He who, in order to stand well with his fellows, was obliged in former times to shake his fist at all others, now is not ashamed to call them brethren. Out of the eater has come forth meat, and out of the strong has come forth sweetness. That division of labor, however, which is as necessary in the ecclesiastical world as in the economic will render it always desirable that one body shall press upon the world's notice one aspect of religious truth and another another. Any union which should obscure this important function would be therefore a loss to the Christian Church, not a gain. But tone, atmosphere, spirit, is here, as elsewhere, the most important thing; and the similarity of character and thought among the leading representatives of different religious communions is a cheering indication that these are coming to hold the faith "in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." To have the service to the community which each has fulfilled stated so clearly, so judiciously, so amicably, as in this interesting and valuable book, is a help to

interpreting the past and understanding the present and preparing the future.

FREDERIC PALMER.

HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON. OLIVER W. FIRKINS. The Houghton Mifflin Co.
1915. Pp. 379. \$1.75.

The external facts of the life of Emerson have long been before the public, and the generation following his own has had time to sum up and assimilate his thought. Already he has seemed to be of those figures of the past to whom we may return to be reminded of the forces that stimulated our early growth, but from whom we no longer expect surprises. Only the access to fresh materials would seem to justify a new general treatment of his life and work; and such an access has been afforded by the publication of his Journals. These extensive diaries, kept by Emerson during the greater part of his life, have now been edited, and fill ten volumes. They might have been completed merely by a critical account of what they do to correct or supplement our previous knowledge of the man and his work. Professor Firkins has preferred to re-tell the whole story and re-estimate the whole body of Emerson's writings as these now lie entire before us. The result more than justifies his decision.

The treatment is nothing if not systematic. Half the volume is biographical, and one could not ask for a more satisfactory presentation of the personality and environment of its subject. Professor Firkins is sufficiently detached from the atmosphere and tradition of New England to be able to deal with them in truer perspective than most writers on the Concord philosophers have been able to achieve. His attitude towards the man Emerson is sympathetic and admiring without being adulatory; and a lively sense of humor adds vivacity to his characterization of the minor worthies. The selection of biographical material is adequate for all the purposes of the student interested primarily in Emerson's thought, and the handling of it is admirable.

The second part of the book consists of chapters on "The Harvest," "Emerson as Prose Writer," "Emerson as Poet," and "Emerson's Philosophy," and closes with "Foreshadowings." In the first of these the author undertakes to characterize one by one all the separate essays and lectures that constitute the Emersonian canon. This laborious task is accomplished with skill and versatility; but before the reader finishes the chapter his wonder at the author's conscientious daring in assuming such a burden almost gets the better of his